THE CAPACITIES OF *ANYONE*:

ACCOMMODATING THE UNIVERSAL HUMAN SUBJECT AS VALUE AND IN SPACE

Nigel Rapport

Introduction

What is a human being capable of achieving, and what is he or she liable to suffer? I am concerned to say a human being is capable of creating worlds; and he or she is liable to suffer subjection within the worlds of others and to subject others to his or her own. 'Concerned to say', because this abstract formulation challenges structuralist and post-structuralist tendencies in anthropology and posits existential capacities of human being beyond the particularities of social, cultural and historical contexts.

Philosophical voices have been less circumspect in this regard, as have literary. 'A whole universe can be said to be destroyed each time a human being dies', is how Karl Popper and John Eccles (1977:3) sum up a metaphysic they see as essentially Kantian , while for Nietzsche:

The individual is something quite new which creates new things, something absolute; all his acts are entirely his own. [1968:#767]

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More personally phrased, William Blake knew of himself that:

I must Create a System, or be enslav'd by another Man's. [1997:10/20]

I feel comfortable anthropologically, nevertheless, with formulations of this existential or 'cosmopolitan' kind. They seem both morally necessary and empirically justifiable and I want to continue outlining what might be known as the capacities of Anyone, the global human actor, the mortal individual.

The chapter has four main parts. Having considered what might be understood to be the *capacities* of Anyone, I venture a depiction of *goodness* as it might be practised in a humane space: a refraining from visiting one's desires on others such that Anyone might come into their own. In a third part, I explore a possible *mathematics of morality* founded on the number one: on the absolute value of Anyone's individual life. Finally, I draw briefly on recent research among porters (orderlies) in a Scottish hospital, in particular aspects of the life-story of Oliver, in order to give to the above an ethnographic colouration. ('ethnography', in Lisette Josephides's recent phrasing, may be depicted as a 'sum total of life stories' (2008:222)).

Ernest Gellner (1995:8) wrote that, 'our moral crisis is also the fruit of our liberation from want and tyranny. Our predicament is —to work out the social options of our affluent and disenchanted condition. We have no choice about this'. Gellner was directing his remarks primarily at social science. To take up that challenge is to imagine a cosmopolitan project for anthropology that recognises the life of every individual human being as an end in itself. In every individual life is also instantiated the human: there is a universal relationship to be drawn out

between the microcosmic situations of everyday life (individuals as members of a <u>polis</u>) and the macrocosmic nature of the human condition (individuals as member of a <u>cosmos</u>). This chapter is an engagement with Gellner's 'predicament' inasmuch as it takes global morality to be a pressing and current anthropological concern. How best to allow for the emotional and intellectual life-journey of the individual actor in social milieux? How might one inscribe, within an everyday rule of law, the duties and dues, the humane norms and spaces, of the fulfilled individual life?[1] A cosmopolitan ethic is one which would secure Anyone universal recognition.

<u>Anyone's capacities</u>

A beginning is provided by Sartre's aphorism: 'existence precedes essence'. This is such an important prescription because it contains a recognition that human consciousness and activity are never reducible to notions of givens, to preceding conditions or to extant social structures and identities —to that which, in other words, is often anthropologically supposed to determine the conditions of their possibility. Human consciousness and activity will always go beyond the essence or identity of what is or has been.

Sartre's thinking moved between more existentialist and more Marxian formulations, but notionally, to a Marxian thesis —'Men make their own history but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past'— Sartre responds (1956) that while individuals make their history on the foundation of prior conditions, it is they and not inhuman forces who do the making. Moreover, they do so in terms of their own relations with, their own attendances to and interpretations of, those conditions.

Lived experience is characterized by a dialectical irreducibility, Sartre elaborates. Individuals are not determined by prior or extraneous conditions but are always in active relationship with them: the experiencing of these conditions is neither preconditioned nor passive. Indeed, the dialectic is such that the conditions and the experience achieve a certain form and meaning at one and the same time: the conditions are only what they are experienced to be, while the individual self emerges out of the act of experiencing the world. Ego and environing world are involved in a mutual becoming: 'Without the world there is no self-ness, no person; without self-ness, without the person, there is no world' (Sartre 1956:104). The individual amounts to a perennially unique interplay of the given and the experienced: a unique synthetic unity of experienced environment.

This gives human life a characteristic form: an emerging and a going beyond. As Rollo May phrases it (1958:60):

> World is never something static, something merely given which the
> person then 'accepts' or 'adjusts to' or 'fights'. It is rather a dynamic
> pattern which, so long as I possess self-consciousness, I am in the
> process of forming and designing.

The interplay between the given and the interpreted thus has two paramount features: an openness at one time, and an openness over time. Since there is an indeterminate relationship between conditions and their being experienced, there is no saying how the individual interpretation will progress. Meaning is produced in the phenomenal context of particular lives, while the interpretation of context is itself individual in provenance; contextualization amounts to

a 'personalization' of the world (Rapport 1999). Moreover, individuals may produce (interpretations of) environing conditions which are multiple and transitory and find themselves acting in a shifting mosaic of realities, a diversity of identities and world-views (Rapport 1993). Self and world alike are never finished or brought to a close, are always in the making. Just as there is no externally predetermined selfhood so there is no necessary internal consistency regarding future selfhood; there is, instead, a radical freedom to make selfhood over and again.

One corollary of this is that any fixity, habit or routine in the world is something which has been achieved and which must continue to be worked at so as to be maintained. Even when the routine takes the form of socio-cultural institutions —social structures and systems of classificatory identity— there is no stability in the latter beyond their ongoing recognition and continuing employment by individual interpreters. A second corollary, however, is that even where such institutions *are* aspects of environment that are maintained alike by the acts of interpretation of different individuals, there is no saying that the meanings each draws from the experience of those institutions will show any consistency or commonality (Rapport 1997). There remains, as Michael Jackson phrases it (1989:33), an 'ambiguity at the heart of all social existence: the indeterminate relationship between the eventfulness and flux of one's own life and the seemingly frozen forms of ongoing cultural tradition'. The habitual is an ambiguous achievement.

In the making of their circumstances people imagine, interpret, negotiate with, protest against, and endure prior conditions in complex and individual ways. And while part of their world-making and sense-making may involve the use by individuals of given and conventional cultural forms —languages, behaviours, institutions— still, these are properly viewed as

'instrumentalities, not finalities' (Jackson 1989:1). They are means towards individuals' diverse, progressing ends: objects animated by diverse world-views and individual life-projects.

Capacites and power

The capacities of human consciousness and activity to determine individual worlds speak of power. Power can be conceived of existentially as an inherent attribute of individuals who, through their ongoing activity-in-the-world, create and recreate meaningful environments in which they live. On this view individuals are discrete centres of energy. Their existential power is at once something metabolic, something pertaining to individuals as embodied physical organisms, and something intelligent, pertaining to the capacity to sense and make sense. It is a drive and an assimilation. The extant is taken up and animated as means to express individual interpretations; the givenness of the world is transmogrified into individual design.

Already in the womb —the body developing and acting— individuals begin to become distinctly themselves, to accrete identities and personalities. Physical movement is key here, and interpretation of what the senses relay to be the results of this movement. What develops is a personal environment in which individual minds dwell, what James Fernandez refers to as our human 'phenomenological subjectivity' (1992:127,134-5). From the moment the individual energy source begins moving in its environment and becoming itself (its selves), a unique history of embodiment, of worldly engagement, unfolds and grows which compasses its own logics, its own habits, its own ways of doing and being, and its own purposes.

Of course, the individual organism-plus-its-environment is not alone in the world. It is discrete but not alone. It is embarked upon a distinct journey of activity-in-the-world (-in-*its*-world) and sense-making, but it is surrounded by a plurality of other things-in-the-world,

inorganic and organic, some engaged in comparable journeys to its own. On this view, social science might be broadly described as the study of the effects that energetic individual things-in-the-world have upon one another. This is a far from singular or easily generalizable matter (which is why a respect for the individual case goes to the very heart of social science as a project). Since each individual centre-of-energy is driven by its own metabolism, within its own embodiment, along its own historical course of activity-in-the-world, how each will react to other things is not determinable; more specifically, it is difficult, if not impossible, to predict whether and how one human being will affect another human being with whom it comes into contact. This is so for three reasons: firstly, because each is set upon its own life-course, each is engaged in interpreting world-views and in furthering life-worlds whose direction and logic have been distinct from the moment each began; secondly, because each engages with others from the position of outsider: each is dependent on bodily sense-making apparatuses which are discrete and distinctive to itself, which imbue it with its own perspective on the world and no other; and thirdly, because the sense-making procedures of each is characterized by a creativity —a 'randomness' even (Rapport 2001)— which makes their generation of perspectives unpredictable even to themselves.

An appropriate way to conceive of human social life, Ralph Waldo Emerson suggests, is a meeting between different individuals' 'native force' as mediated by the habitual forms of social conventions, cultural traditions, physical conditions: '[l]ife itself is a mixture of power and form' (1981:280). A 'prosperous' social life, he offers, results from a 'proportionate' meeting between individuals' intrinsic force and those surface conventions, traditions and forms which act as both buffers and points of contact between themselves and others: '[w]e live amid surfaces, and the true art of life is to skate well on them' (1981:280).

Interlude: Oliver in conversation at Constance Hospital

In a crowded porters' lodge at Constance Hospital in the Scottish city of Easterneuk, orderlies Oliver and Ron, Dave, Arthur and others are relaxing between portering jobs, and enjoying some good-natured banter as they wait for the kettle to boil:

OLIVER: So which slag are you seeing now, Ron?

RON: It's your mum, again, Ollie! [People laugh]

DAVE: I remember phoning Ollie's home once and I said: 'Can I speak to "the bairn"?'. And straight off his mum shouts: 'Oliver! It's for you'! [More laughter]

RON: So have you been back to the Eldorado [Nightclub] yet, Ollie?

OLIVER: [embarrassed] ...I'm not allowed back! I'm known as 'The one with the bitten ear'. And I'm not to be let in again. Banned! As if it's my fault! [Oliver has recently recovered from a pub fight where a drunken assailant attacked his ear]

RON: I remember not being let into Reilly's, by this fat hunk of a bouncer: bald guy. Know who I mean, Dave? Fred? [People nod] I wasn't drunk, as it happened, but the bald bastard said I was and I couldn't come in. So I started going on at him: 'Ya bald cunt!'; 'Ya fat cunt!'; 'Ya baldy!'; and then ran off down the street... Then recently I saw him in A and E [Accident and Emergency] —and he's a really big bloke! [People grin] I was down there waiting for some job —someone in the Fracture Clinic— and I was really hoping Baldy didn't spot me... Then, I sees him talking to Bob Hume and I think maybe he's making inquiries about me. [He laughs]

FRED: And?

RON: No; nothing happened. I don't think he remembered me.

OLIVER: That's the guy that wouldn't let me into Reilly's 'cos he said I wasn't 25.

DAVE: And he was right!

OLIVER: [laughing] Gut bucket! So I thought 'Fuck it!' and I went to the Eldorado where my
friends were anyway.

ARTHUR: This woman in the queue at Reilly's asked Ollie how old he was and he said '19' and
she said she had a son older than that and I told her she probably had knickers older than
that —

OLIVER: — aye, and you're probably wearing them! [People laugh]

ARTHUR: She was not impressed!

We shall return to Oliver and his workmates at a later point in the chapter and consider his life at
Constance Hospital in more depth.

<u>Anyone's space</u>

One way of summarizing what we have heard from Sartre and others, concerning a distinction
between existence and essence is to say that individuals are more than their particular
membership of social and cultural groupings at particular times (cf. Rapport 2001:205). They
have an existence, a power and potentiality, which set them apart from extant social arrangements
—from all current habits and identities. Temporarily, superficially, they meet others by way of
these latter; intrinsically, these meetings of the moment do not capture the true individuality of
human life: its capacity to create meaningful environments for itself and to go on doing so.

What rights or duties might be said to inhere to this individual life, lived amid and among others' but intrinsically distinct from them? How might individuals' capacities for world-making be best served by social arrangements —not now treated as determining conditions but as facilitators of individual passage? One would assure individuals freedom to enjoy the fruits of their creativity and to avoid subjection to others' agendas. This is a very different starting point from a Durkheimian one, say, which ties the moral to the conventional: what is moral is synonymous with social reproduction and an eradication of social 'pathologies'. One would rather conceive of the moral as a kind of space existing beyond social arrangements and cultural traditions and allowing for exit from them: a personal preserve which individuals are assured for themselves as (makers of) themselves.

Iris Murdoch (2001) makes a good beginning, I find, when she suggests defining 'goodness' less in terms of 'doing good to others' than 'refraining from doing others harm': abstaining from visiting one's desires upon them. If goodness <u>per se</u> were 'sovereign' —rather than goodness being something tied to existing social conventions— then a moral milieu would entail arrangements for facilitating individuals' 'coming into their own'. One cannot foresee what the latter phrase might entail in regard to another life —one does not even know it substantially in regard to one's own— but one can hope to behave in such a way that each life is afforded the space it needs.

Goodness and space

Virginia Woolf famously campaigned for 'a room of her own', where a woman might find that space away from the demands of domesticity in which periodically to know herself, re-create herself (1963). Stanley Spencer likewise, fleeing from the press of material demands and a

censorious public, as well as the suffocation of marriage, insisted that in fulfilling the creativity that mediated his life:

> My chief and only occupation is with my own thoughts. An empty room, a fire in the grate, are my chief need. [cited in Collis 1962:15]

The core issue here, however, is not physical space per se. In order to make an ethical argument concerning the sovereignty of a personal preserve in which individuals may come into their own it should not be necessary to enter into a debate concerning material resources. At least not directly. One wants, rather, to consider that symbolic space —intellectual, emotional, even physiological— in which an individual can be 'at home' (Rapport and Dawson 1998).

The notion of 'Lebensraum' as a physical need or demand is, indeed, something one should expressly wish to avoid. The 70 years since the claims to institutional sovereignty of Nazism have seen an explosion in similar, collective identity politics and demands for sacrosanct (even 'cleansed') homelands —whether on the basis of ethnicity or religiosity. These years have also seen global demographic growth and movement to the extent that conceiving of one's space in symbolic rather than extensive, physical terms has become as necessary for individuals as for nations, ethnicities or churches. We are witness to a 'cultural compression' (Paine 1992), a piling up of socio-cultural boundaries —ritual, residential, economic— within the 'same' time and space to the extent that for individuals to travel within their 'home' territory is increasingly to encounter a confusion of claimed difference. As E. M. Forster reflected:

The world is very full of people —appallingly full; it has never been so full before, and they are tumbling over each other. Most of these people one doesn't know and some of them one doesn't like; doesn't like the colour of their skins, say, or the shape of their noses, or the way they blow them or don't blow them. (...) Don't try to love them: you can't, you'll only strain yourself. But try to tolerate them. [1972:55]

I like the physiological terms in which Forster framed notions of distaste and of toleration. What is called for, in part, it would seem to me, is a conceptualization of the space in which the individual is at home —the room one accords to oneself and to others as a personal preserve, a 'home territory'— and conceiving this in terms of bodily routines. Morally one attends to the sacrosanct sovereignty of the mortal individual body. Home is then mobile, and as compact as the individual's body. Home is also fluid and as capable of variation and development as is that individual body: at exercise or repose, in different mood and dress, at different moments of the life-course.

John Berger nicely captures this theme when he finds home located in 'words, jokes, opinions, gestures, actions, even the way one wears a hat': 'no longer a dwelling but the untold story of a life being lived' (1984:64). On this view an individual's home space is imaged as a kind of symbolic bubble: a subjective space of body-plus-habitus, encompassing world-views, bodily routines and 'life-projects' (Rapport 2003:215-39). The bubble accompanies one as one moves —through space and through one's life-course— and it is an environment which one rightfully commands —over which one is recognized as retaining sovereign control.

If home space is conceived of in this way as a kind of extended bodily sensorium, there is the opportunity to rethink physical locatedness as a kind of 'mutual guesthood'. That is, one

refrains from demarcating, in any permanent or absolute way, ownership of physical space, its 'hosts' and 'guests'. Instead one imagines a reciprocality and a seriality to these roles such that no individual need be conceived of as absolutely 'at home' in a place, or as absolutely 'away'. Who is 'at home' or 'away' is a matter of the nature and purpose of particular conventional exchanges rather than absolute belongings. Alternatively conceived, particular social conventions are 'at home' in a physical location while their individual incumbents are transitory: the statuses of hosts and guests are situational and alternating. This is what George Steiner describes as the dignified, humane return one may expect from investing one's identity not in physical territory —or the fixity of any earth-bound relationship— but in the physical finitude of one's being. It entails, he suggests (1997:327) mapping out the 'native ground' of truth in human life not in terms of space but of time.[2] Home is a personal truth which one carries within, and whose identity one continues to fashion during the time of one's life.

The space of social life

I have been arguing for the need to consider the sacrosanct space of a sovereign individual life in symbolic terms, and 'moral' social arrangements as those that facilitate transitions (a 'coming into one's own') whether in physical transit through space or through the life-course. Belonging is conceived of here not in terms of mutually exclusive, singular identifications with territory, nor in terms of absolute membership of certain social roles (insider and outsider, host and guest), but in terms of their serial adoption. Let me recall Emerson's suggestion that one considers a 'proportionate meeting' between the forms of social life and the 'native force' of individuals that animates those forms: the surface conventions act as buffers and points of contact between individuals' interpretive activity-within-the-world. The 'prosperous' social life, to repeat

Emerson's counsel, derives from artfully skating on the social surfaces. It is not far-fetched, I shall say, to consider this kind of superficial meeting the basis of a moral social contract.

To begin to justify this claim let me rehearse the insights of Anthony Wallace (1961, 1962) which concerned social space as a kind of 'organization of diversity'. Wallace's opening premise was that a routinization of relations in a social milieu need not call for psychological uniformity, for individuals sharing a homogenous 'cultural' character: 'threaded like beads on a string of common motives'. Individuals may interact in a stable and mutually rewarding fashion, organize themselves socially into orderly and changing groupings in spite of their having radically different interests, habits, personalities, values and beliefs: despite there being no one cognitive map that members share. Indeed, cognitive non-uniformity may be a necessary condition of making social coordination possible; if all participants were to share a common knowledge of their social arrangements, or indeed the burden of knowing their differences, then their routinization may not be viable. What was called for to maintain orderly relations was what Wallace dubbed 'equivalence structures': sets of equivalent behavioural expectancies such that individual participants had a capacity for mutual prediction. Individual 'A' knows that when she perpetrates action a1 then individual 'B', in all likelihood, will perpetrate action b1, which will lead to her doing a2, et cetera. Meanwhile, individual 'B' knows that when he perpetrates action b1, individual 'A' responds with a1, which he follows with b2. But individuals 'A' and 'B' need not concur on when precisely the interaction begins and whose action is perpetrated first —on who acts and who reacts— never mind on what those actions mean.[3]

In short, individuals' behaviours could be aggregated into reliable and joint systems by appreciating that under certain circumstances others' behaviour was predictable and could be confidently interrelated with actions of their own. This formulation of social relations, Wallace

suggested, fitted not only interactions between, for example, bus drivers and passengers whose interests in avoiding traffic jams may be very different, but also between different social groupings (bosses and workers) who may not share ideologies, and between different cultural groupings —Native Americans and Whites, trading and skirmishing for years without mutual comprehension.

Nevertheless, what the bus driver and passengers (et al.) did share was something very precise, Wallace was mindful, and something sturdy too. Their interests in keeping to timetables overlapped, their motives in riding the bus were complementary, and they possessed detailed, mutual behavioural expectancies. Moreover, the relations were standardized between any driver and any passenger within the urban, regional, national or global system. Wallace called this a 'contract': something where the equivalent roles were specified and available for implementation to any parties whose motives made their adoption promising. And we might extend this to parents and children, spouses, lovers and friends, whose interactional routines, too, may be characterized by 'beliefs and blindnesses' (Compton-Burnett 1969:30): whose cognitive worlds were uniquely private (Rapport 1993).

Let me re-state what is at issue here. We are considering social arrangements that might safeguard a kind of moral space that locates individuals beyond any existing relationship and identity such that they might be free to fulfil their capacities for self-creation, to 'come into their own'. Here are individuals as 'mutual guests' (Steiner) of 'behavioural contracts' (Wallace), in social and physical spaces to which they do not lay absolute claims of ownership because they are 'at home' in bodily routines (Berger) and life-projects (Rapport). Here is the moral goodness (Murdoch) of granting sovereignty to individuals' personal environments, their subjective phenomenologies (Fernandez).

It is a paradoxical social creature whose form we are considering, then: one that will safeguard a moral vision (and give on to the space of individual lives) which exists always beyond itself. Is it a chimera? I believe not. Wallace is very down-to-earth in his description of social milieux as 'organizations of diversity': home to 'equivalent structures' which manage the coming together of radically different individual lives by way of superficially coincident expectations concerning each other's behaviour. The 'friendly ambiguities of language' everywhere lends an 'economy' to interpersonal relations, in Edward Sapir's terms (1956:153), such that interlocutors may interact routinely with one another even though the world-views each construes may be as different as though one were operating in a world of Turkish traditionalism and one an Italian. One social calculus *can* contain paradoxical dualities —indeed, multiplicities. Conventions are animated by contrariety. A seemingly collective project of habitual behaviours compasses any number of discrete and contrary, individual life-projects: social arrangements may, in short, facilitate lives beyond themselves, beyond what superficially seems to be their object.

Finally, it is appropriate to be mindful of how longstanding a practice it has been to consider existing social arrangements as giving on to a moral space beyond themselves. It has been, indeed, a staple of modernist social science. In existing social arrangements —feudalism, capitalism— a Marxian dialectical materialism claims a necessary precursor to the radical otherness of the risen proletariat and communism. From existing social arrangements Nietzsche plots a possible future which is home to the 'overman'. The 'honourable' state of 'homelessness', he wrote, of living a 'nomadic life' between physical homes, material goods and relations, contains the promise of a general future culture of cosmopolitanism (1994:#475); '[g]ood Europeans' can be 'children of the future' who see beyond present social identities of an absolute

exclusionary kind —traditionalist, nationalistic— to an overman whose business will more explicitly entail the ongoing project of individual self-fulfilment (2001:#377). In existing social arrangements, according to the liberal tradition —John Stuart Mill as well as Emerson and Forster— individual freedom and creativity, the gratuitous and the new *can* be made legally sacrosanct.

Anyone's value

Some have argued that individuality can never exist as an ongoing *collective* project since this is a contradiction in terms. For George Kateb (1991), therefore, citizenship must remain an episodic state: 'the polis' of 'a people' must be regarded as an accidental, voluntary, temporary and purpose-specific aggregation if we are to avoid notions of social groups as continuous and natural, discrete, closed, certain and fixed. Nevertheless, Kateb continues (1991:185), liberal governments can provide certain advantageous conditions:

> [D]emocratic individuality grows (...) out of a culture in which individual personal and political rights are systematically recognized and appreciated.

In other words, one can educate for a state beyond adherence and inhibition, for individual identities which are formulated and anchored beyond social and cultural absolutes, zealotry and bigotry. To educate for democratic individuality would be to loosen the hold of ideologues who '[take] an invented group reality for a natural reality and allow it to impose itself, to dictate a logic or pattern that must complete itself' (Kateb1992:210). The fruits of such an 'education'

would be that 'The People' are only ever seen as a group connected by choice —not the past or blood or faith— in a series of contracts of mutual (but varied) gratification.

If lives are admitted to 'self-governance', in Kateb's phrasing, and are their individuals' own to come into, then they might escape being held accountable to —made invisible or contemptible by— others' systems of classification and interpretation. Kateb, like Blake before him, or Mill ('[deny] the despotism of custom') fears for the liabilities of an individual life enclosed by tradition, status, class, locality or ethnicity: 'the whole suffocating network of ascribed artificial, or biological but culturally exaggerated, identity' (1991:188). Kateb would describe self-governance as a right: a 'moral status' that 'every individual deserves just by being' (1991:188). Anyone equally has a life to live and the right to live it, he claims, the right to say and do their own things and to be like others only after some thought and as a choice. Our theoretical discussion so far has dealt with the kinds of social arrangements that might do justice to an individual's inherent capacities for such self-creation and assure them of symbolic space.

There is, however, an ingredient missing. Or one that has not been made sufficiently explicit. Kateb admits as much. More is necessary, he says, for a 'working society' than simply claiming self-governance as a *right* (1991:201). This more, it seems to me, is *value*: the system of values that raises self-governance, and an individual's personal preserve, to supreme goods. For it is clear that Iris Murdoch's definition of goodness, and all that has followed, are at the same time value judgements: estimations of 'the good life'. This is true, too, of Kateb's depiction of 'democratic individuality', and of his and other liberal critiques of the unreality of the organic collective, the commonweal, the community's 'greater good'.[4]

The liberal vision has been subject to critique in recent decades for a purported myopia in regard to its own ideological nature: its value judgements raised to universal truths. I would begin

this section by deliberately drawing attention to liberal projects *as values* because I think that,

notwithstanding, they deliver a way to evaluate the human condition that is universalisable: they

recognise a universal truth of the human condition, namely its individual nature. Beginning as

value it is possible nevertheless to accede to truth (Rapport 2005). Liberalism contains a

mathematics of value that, I would argue, accords with universal realities of individuality, and

realities that morality might everywhere provide for.[5]

The kind of 'mathematics' I refer to can be found in Mill's nineteenth-century

deliberations on liberty (1963[1859]). Witness how Mill juxtaposes the one against the collective

whole in the following propositions, and finds reason to furnish 'oneness', or singularity or

individuality, with protection:

* The only freedom which deserves the name, is that of pursuing our own good in our own

    way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to

    obtain it. Each is the proper guardian of his own health, whether bodily, or mental and

    spiritual. Mankind are greater gainers by suffering each other to live as seems good to

    themselves, than by compelling each to live as seems good to the rest [p. 138]

* If all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary

    opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he

    had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind. (...) The peculiar evil of silencing

    the expression of an opinion is, that it is robbing the human race; posterity as well as the

    existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it.

    If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth:

if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error. [p. 142]

*   Whatever crushes individuality is despotism, no matter what name it is called. [p. 188]

I share the value that Mill espouses in these statements, that there is an intrinsic identity and capacity inherent in Anyone, and that a liberal society will promote the freedom of Anyone to live according to his or her own lights over and against 'the despotism of custom' and the tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling: 'the tyranny of the majority'. But my interest is especially in how Mill couches his arguments in a certain mathematical form. The one is to be protected because opinions which originate freely within itself and come to be pursued in its own way are the means not only by which that individual guards its own bodily, mental and spiritual health but also the means by which others —ultimately humankind— now and in future, might advance towards a truth beyond existing conventions. The one is protected because the collectivity is itself a collection of ones —nothing more— and in the nature of the one is lodged the hope of the whole. 'The worth of the state, in the long run, is the worth of the individuals composing it' (Mill 1963:240). If one values the state of health and progress of humanity then one cannot ignore that of individuals, of whom the whole is composed. Anyone is an instantiation of Everyone. The one represents an absolute value because it embodies the human truth.

I find a commensurate mathematics in a tantalising remark of Ludwig Wittgenstein's, some one hundred years after Mill:

No cry of torment can be greater than the cry of one person [1980:45]

Human suffering, Wittgenstein seems to say, does not lend itself to a calculus of mathematical aggrandisement. Suffering cannot be given over to a kind of utilitarian moral economy; nor to massifying and collectivising mathematic which would enfold the suffering of the individual within the matrix of his or her group, such as is common in communitarian rhetoric of 'the general good'. The suffering of the individual being represents a kind of absolute, entire of itself. One cannot add together the suffering of two people —which would diminish the worth of each alone— because each is an absolute instantiation of the quality or capacity. In Anyone is the whole.[6]

The difference between Mill and Wittgenstein lies in discursive domain. Mill evaluates the individual amid a political discourse of liberal statehood: Wittgenstein evaluates amid an existential discourse of corporeal well-being. And the difference is perhaps instructive. For the century between Mill and Wittgenstein saw major advances in our understanding of the conditions surrounding the physical, mental and emotional health of the individual human being; in particular the individual nature of his or her biological consciousness (Edelman 1992). Anyone's mortal embodiment, his or her capabilities for suffering and health, have represented a major part of the knowledge which sciences of psychology, neurology, biochemistry, genomics have newly delivered to us. The nature of human-individual embodiment —and the false nature of so-called collective super-organisms (the Nazi or Stalinist or Islamist state)— have become ever more apparent. It is appropriate in this circumstance, then, that the focus of liberal effort is upon the individual's physical embodiment as much as upon his or her political incorporation. A liberal, in Judith Shklar's recent definition, is one who thinks that 'cruelty' is the worst thing that human beings perpetrate against one another (cited in Rorty 1992:xv). One erects a moral code

based on the security of the individual's physical embodiment: his or her being at home in secure bodily routines. Advances in technology now allow us to make interventions —medical, political— at this microsocial level. We pursue a mathematics of value which focuses upon the absoluteness of the individual's corporeal (physical and mental) well-being as a route to political sovereignty.

In what she calls a 'tactical humanism', Lila Abu-Lughod (1990:138) would seem to arrive at a similar position regarding anthropological writing. One must write 'against culture', she argues (1990:157), and other such generalizing, fundamentalist-essentialist conceptualizations —'society', 'community', 'ethnicity', 'gender' and 'race'— and so produce 'ethnographies of the particular'. These would be precise accounts of the existence of particular individuals in particular times and places —retaining those absolute particularities— and which do not replace actual individualities with categorial objects. It is in the individual not the typical that the human is to be found: 'we all live in the particular' (Abu-Lughod 1990:157) and a humanistic anthropology will seek to do justice to the subjectivity of the individual life.

The morality of the individual's personal preserve is imbued with a mathematics of value which recognises the supremacy of the individual case.

Oliver at Constance Hospital

Oliver was 18 when we met, but he looked younger: short, with a spare frame. I think his apparent vulnerability was one of the things that attracted me to him when I, too, began working as a porter at Constance Hospital (Rapport 2008). That, and his guileless manner: an open smile and cheeky remark was how Oliver deflected much of the teasing he attracted from more macho workmates.

As a neophyte porter I was told to shadow Oliver on his rounds: he had worked here for two years already, since leaving school. Oliver was doing the specimens-run, collecting body samples from all the Hospital's 50-odd wards (spread along some 30 miles of corridor) and delivering them to the appropriate Hospital laboratories for testing. He quite liked doing specimens, Oliver explained to me, because it meant he was his own boss, at least for the four, hour-long lengths of the run, and also he got away from the 'buckie' (porters' lodge) which could get a bit much: 'all the slagging' (criticising or teasing). Everyone got a slagging some time, Oliver hastened to add, as I should have noticed even in my first few days, and it could get a bit tedious being in the buckie all the time. Oliver's story, however, as I witnessed its unfolding over the ensuing year of my fieldwork, was about him coming into his own in Constance Hospital and its portering sub-community: finding the space to become a far more confident personality —and a slagger himself.

Constance Hospital is a large medical facility, part of the British National Health system; it is also one of the major employers in Easterneuk, a Scottish port-city with a history of male under-employment. Porters are medically unskilled, being employed largely for their physical aptitudes as they ferry patients and materièl across the Hospital plant. Constance employs nearly 150 porters (all but two being male) ranging in age from 16 to 65. Their status is rather ambiguous in the context of the Hospital and their pay poor; liminal to the Hospital's hierarchy of medical expertise, porters can find themselves reliant on one another for moral support.

Some days after Oliver and I have done the specimens-run together I find Albert doing the job. Oliver is off, Albert informs me: 'he was jumped last night. He's in Ward 32 with part of his ear bitten off! Waiting for surgery: been in since last night'. I am shocked, appalled, but Albert seems to find it more amusing than anything else. He suggests we go to visit him, as others have

done, 'and slag him a bit'. We soon find Oliver lying on top of his bed, in a hospital gown

watching TV. He looks sheepish. Albert teases Oliver more than once about how the incident

must have worried his mum, her being woken at 2 a.m.

'Oliver the bairn', Oliver's mother, and the bitten ear, I soon realize form a triad in terms

of which the porters repeatedly tease Oliver. At first I notice Oliver's hurt and embarrassment.

But the badinage is not ill-intentioned, and Oliver appreciates this. On his way home after

surgery Oliver and his mother even make an appearance at the buckie: she hovers at the door

looking anxious and worn while he wears a smirk, walking among us proudly displaying his

extensively bandaged ear and inviting comment.

The symbolic space which Oliver accrues for himself at Constance has a number of

components. First is coming to accept, even enjoy, the public persona which is given him by his

workmates: it is a kind of behavioural contract. They tease him about his ear, his size and age, his

closeness to his mother; also his taste in clothes. He is a mere apprentice and a nuisance. For

instance:

ARTHUR: God. I'm gonna get eight more hours of shite from this fuckwit?!

Or

DUGALD: Oliver could get a job as bouncer at Mothercare. [People laugh]

DAVE: Wardy was teasing him before about still having no hair on his dick —Oliver threatened

      to take down his trousers and show him— and Kevin was saying it wasn't that Oliver was

      sweating: he was still wet behind the ears from being born!

Or, as Oliver parades round the buckie in a new silk shirt before leaving for a disco:

ARTHUR: No wonder he had his ear bitten off: I'd do it!

JOHNSTONE: Poof!

It tends to be the same people who tease Oliver, and I realise it is a way of showing care, part of a relationship characterised by mutual gratification. Oliver likes the 'Little Mohammed' label when he puts in a lot of hours overtime; he likes that it is known he was 'shagging a bird' —even though she came from a neighbourhood renowned for being 'full of Micks'. Alongside the teasing is a conveying of significant information: It was a bottle, Oliver was hit with, Peter knows, and he his skin graft was taken from behind his ear... Oliver won't press for criminal injury, Albert has heard, because he knows the bloke who did it, but Dugald has already suggested to him he still does a sickness Insurance Line for work… Oliver is lucky not to have been bitten on the face, Ian comments, and there is general agreement: a scar there leads to more trouble as folks take it as a sign of your hardness, and always want to challenge you... Arthur wishes Oliver would only drink with people his own age: if he follows the example of older porters the amounts will ruin his kidneys by the time he's 30.

Amid this caring atmosphere Oliver comes to develop a routine at the Hospital which he enjoys, and is keen to re-establish after his enforced break through sickness. This includes teasing others: long-haired Albert who primps himself like a film star; Kevin with a gut big enough to dive into; Ron with an appetite for whores but no stamina. The Hospital becomes a space in which Oliver feels at home. His mother and his grandmother work at Constance as cleaners and

this becomes not so much a shameful detail as a comfortable one: 'The whole family's here: its gonna be a family company!', he jokes to me. His mother is handy to lend him money if he is 'skint'; she can run him home after work and then back out to the pub (sometimes, they run into each other in city-centre pubs or taxi-ranks). He buys his mother and sister black-market cds from fellow-porters at Christmas and explains he will have a few days' holiday with them, in Newcastle, before flying off with his mates to Spain. The space of the Hospital, in short, brings together for Oliver the domestic or familial and the workaday. He extends his domestic life into the institution as a kind of appropriation.

The Hospital also becomes an extension of his friendship network and world of gossip. It is a place he finds friends (some he knew in school) with whom to play and watch football, to bet on the horses and to go boozing. There are the great pub crawls at Christmas, and on one's birthday, and the weekly splurge after being paid ('The Thursday Night Club', as Arthur dubbed Oliver's boozing circle). He may end up with only about 5 pounds left for the rest of the week, when food and lodging are taken into account, but Oliver finds the pub crawls worth it: 'As far as I can mind [remember]!'. He develops, too, a personal style of dress, at work and play alike: his portering polo shirt must be yellow, clean and not stretched tight; when drinking or discoing he likes to be fashionable and smart-casual, with a nice shirt and dress trousers, his hair short, his deodorant sweet. It is a style he has the confidence even to take abroad:

> I went to Benidorm for two weeks for my holidays this year. Came back whiter than when I went! 'Cos the pubs didn't shut till 6.30 [a.m.] then I went to bed and hardly saw the sun! [We laugh] I went with eight mates. Great time. My first time abroad. First time I flew too. I had a few drinks before we took off, then I was fine once we were up, drinking away...

We booked up last minute, by [tele]text. I slept on the floor: it didn't matter... I even met two people from Easterneuk I knew! There I was walking down the street and someone calls 'Oliver' —and it's a good pal! 'What are you doing here?!' It's like meeting in Easterneuk city-centre!

Over the year that I knew him I feel that I witnessed Oliver come into his own. This symbolic space comprised a physical security of bodily routines. He knew the workings of Constance Hospital, its shortcuts, its history, and attaches this to a personal biography. A social network linked Constance to family and friends, school and recreation, city-centre pubs and Spain: here were a set of behavioural contracts. Constance Hospital was also something whose future in his life Oliver was considering: he wished me luck when he knew I was leaving and shook my hand, but he was not certain how long he would stay on himself:

There may be some new shift jobs coming up. And I'd go for one of them. Like Alastair McCreanor and Alastair Dent, on shifts. If I got one like them my pay would go up and that would be great.

Meanwhile I was interested to see a new kind of firmness, even stubbornness, enter Oliver's public persona. He would show his annoyance when he felt he was being taken advantage of, insist on his rights even against friendly sub-managers (Arthur, Dave) —much to their exasperation at 'this cheek'. Not for too much longer, I had the impression, would Oliver accept a role of tea-making apprentice.

*

In his novel, *Howards End*, E. M. Forster (1950:245-6) writes how: 'One death may explain itself, but it throws no light upon another: the groping inquiry must begin anew. Preachers or scientists may generalize, but we know that no generality is possible about those whom we love; not one heaven awaits them, not even one oblivion'. I am aware of this conundrum in my ethnography. I *am* a scientist, and I *do* wish to preach a message concerning the value of Anyone and the need to construe a space, both in scientific representation and in social policy, in which Anyone's capacities for world-making may fulfil themselves, but my means for doing this is an irreducibly individual life. I would place an analytical weight on Oliver's life-story and yet the juxtaposition of its recounting against my theoretical argument and terms ('Anyone', 'mutual guesthood', 'mathematics of value') is in the manner of a sharp differentiation. By what right do I encumber 'Oliver' so? I knew him as a workmate for a year, occasionally during our recreation. But in order to recruit him here it is almost as if I have to make him up (I pseudonymise him at least).

Forster was aware of this, at one point describing fiction as 'truer' than social science for the way in which it allowed itself to go beyond the evidence of surfaces to deeper experiential truths (1984:69-70; cf. Rapport 1994). In fact, there are two conundra. I would have Oliver stand for general theoretical propositions when the particularity of individual lives (world-views, sufferings, death) is absolute. Also, I would argue for a particular interpretation of Oliver when other, less benign ones are available: 'Oliver less came into his own at Constance than conformed to a culture of mutual deprecation ("slagging")'; 'the social institution that provided the benign backdrop to the hosting and guesting of expressions of porters' selves actually paid them the pittance that sentenced porters to urban poverty'.

I have one response to the two conundra: 'This is how I knew Oliver'. The fit between the details of his life and my analytical conclusions feels right to me. I do not seek to aggrandise

Oliver's life-story. When I left him he was a hospital porter as when I first met him. The interactional routines in which he makes himself at home at Constance are peopled with the family and friendship figures and the elder role-models one might anticipate for a teenager. Notwithstanding, Oliver's life-story was his own, the result of an intentionality that was his, an interpretation of environing structures and settings that was his, and whose effects was the creation of a context to his life for which he was responsible.

I noticed how particular Oliver was with his appearance: the mousse in his hair, the crease in his canvas trousers. I noted that whenever he stood up in the buckie to go on a job, and whenever he got the urge in a corridor, he would make sure that his portering polo shirt was tucked neatly into his trousers, but with sufficient slack still to drape over the top of his trouser belt to the length of about two inches. Oliver was his own man, it seemed to me, and when he held out his hand to me as a farewell, it was as an equal: it was how I might meet Anyone.

Conclusion

I have wanted this chapter to consider moral social relations: how might anthropology imagine social milieux that facilitate the passage of individual lives and value their unique self-fulfilment. It is within the capacity of Anyone, I have argued, to create individual worlds in dialectical engagement with existing conditions: a moral social arrangement might be where individuals are safeguarded the right to come into their own in terms of personal life-projects (Rapport 2003). The sovereignty and security of an individual's bodily habitus possesses an absolute value.

The paradoxical figure of social arrangements that always point beyond themselves —to where an individual's life-project might alight next— have been imagined as kinds of voluntary, episodic contracts. These contracts maintain a structure —physical and constitutional— as

individuals pass through them, serializing roles of hosts and guests. As 'members' to these contracts, individuals share mutual behavioural expectancies but no more ascriptive or fixed a belonging. Individual members give one another mutual recognition, and they anticipate mutual gratification, but they do not demand mutual comprehension. Individuals honour the sovereignty of one another's symbolic space: a kind of cosmopolitan space, universal and yet individual, a personal preserve, by rights private.

Such social arrangements, behavioural contracts, as working relations have been explored in the context of a state-run British hospital. Constance Hospital has been portrayed as a caring institution both in its formal workings (as part of managerial policy) and informally (as part-and-parcel of a portering sub-community). Constance intends to provide for its employees' lives as these extend in space and time beyond its boundaries: it hosts, at present, their needs and aspirations; its managers play host to its (more liminal) porters; its portering sub-managers play host to its neophytes (Oliver and me); all play host to its patients. In particular Oliver is afforded the symbolic space in which his activities might give onto his own becomings, not inscribed in extant custom. His capacity to fulfil an emotional and intellectual life-journey that is his own and that represents an end in itself is allowed for by an institutional structure (Constance Hospital) on the one hand and, on the other, by informal social relations conducted in a spirit of mutuality.

Anyone is a real human actor (*the* real actor). Anyone exists not as a cultural object but as the universal human subject. Cosmopolitanism predicates 'the human' as a condition over and against the particularities of social setting and cultural tradition: it intends for Anyone's capacities for self-fulfilment to find accommodation in social science and social policy alike.
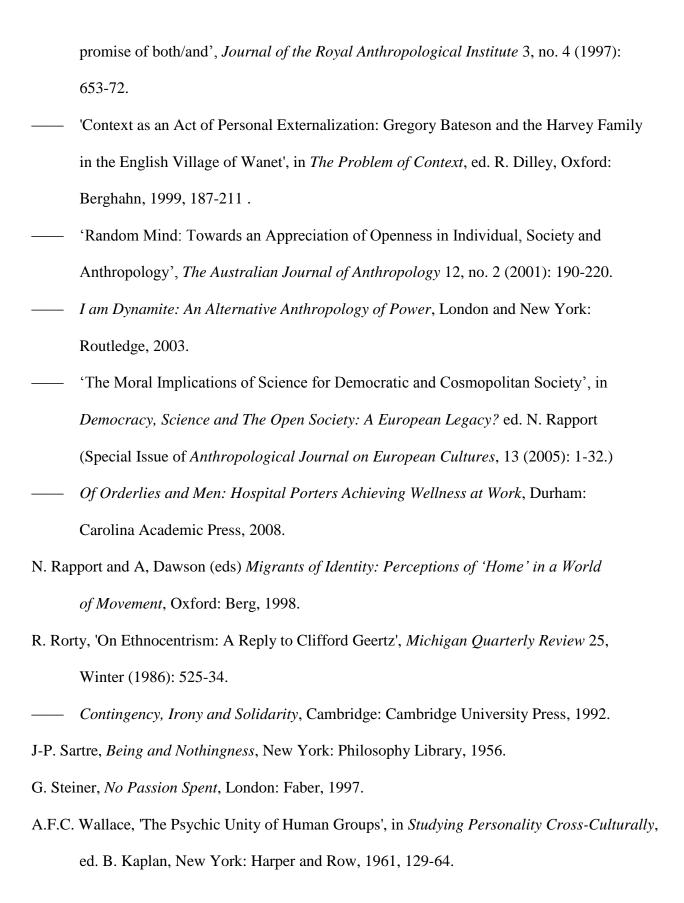
Notes

1. Cf. *2000 Years and Beyond* (Gifford <u>et al.</u>) which explores, from anthropological,

philosophical and theological perspectives the relation of a Judaeo-Christian heritage to a 'fast-

globalizing world' in 'the third millennium'.

2. In a commensurate treatment, David Held suggests sovereignty not in terms of fixed borders

and territories but as 'malleable time-space clusters (…) entrenched and drawn upon in diverse

self-regulating associations, from cities to states to corporations' (1995:234).

3. Along similar lines, George Devereux describes all social processes from the highly

conventional to the revolutionary as operating on the basis of 'ego-syntonism' (1978:126-9). In

the 'same' collective act individuals are able to find a common, socially acceptable behavioural

expression for the (variable) gratification of possibly very different motivations.

4. E. M. Forster (1964:67-8): It is not possible to define 'a thinking mass'; it is not possible to

estimate the worth of 'a general feeling'; it is not possible to locate 'the great world'. And F. R.

Leavis (1972:53): What is the 'social condition' that has nothing to do with the 'individual

condition'? What is the 'social hope' that transcends, cancels or makes indifferent the condition

of each individual? Where is a condition to be located if not in individuals?

5. Richard Rorty (1986:532) makes a similar intervention when he argues that liberal ideals —

procedural justice, human equality— may very well be parochial, recent and eccentric cultural

developments but that does not make them any less worth promoting. Ideals that are local and

culture-bound in provenance can still embody the best hope for the species as a whole.

6. Cf. Graham Greene: 'Suffering is not increased by numbers: one body can contain all the

suffering the world can feel' (1979:183).

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